

Remarks to the Community in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina
December 22, 1997

Thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen, I think we should give a round of applause to Farouk and to Masha. They did a wonderful job, and I'm very proud of them. *[Applause]*

I thank the Sarajevo Philharmonic, President Izetbegovic, President Zubak, members of the Bosnian Government; to the religious leaders who are here, the representatives of civilian and voluntary agencies from around the world, the members of the American delegation; to Senator and Mrs. Dole, Members of Congress; General Shelton, General Clark, General Shinseki; to the people of Sarajevo and the people of Bosnia.

Let me say that all of us from the United States are very honored to be here, to gather in the dawn after a long darkness. For us this is a season of celebration, and we give thanks that the will for peace has triumphed over the weapons of war. At the edge of the 21st century, we come here to resolve to build a new era, free of the 20th century's worst moments and full of its most brilliant possibilities.

What my family and I and our party have seen in the streets of Sarajevo has been deeply moving to us. Only a little more than 2 years ago, men, women, and children ran the gauntlet of snipers and shells in a desperate search for water. Now they walk in security to work and school. Then, sheets of plastic covered nearly every window. Now there is mostly glass, and plastic is rare. Then, people lived in the rubble of bombed out buildings. Now they have roofs over their heads, heat, electricity, and running water. Then, Sarajevo was mired in a deep freeze of destruction. And now, through your labors, it has begun to thaw and to grow anew in the sunlight of peace. Then, shops were barren and cafes were empty. Now, they are filled with food and alive with conversation.

And my wife and daughter and I just had some of that conversation and some pretty good coffee, I might add. *[Laughter]* We just came from a coffee shop where we were talking to a number of young people who work and study here from all different ethnic backgrounds, people determined to build a common future, to let go of the destructive past. And I went around the table and let every one of them tell me whatever they wanted to say. And then I said,

"Now, what is the most important thing the United States could do to help you on your way?" And in unison they said, "Stay for a while longer."

Then the time came for us to come here. And Hillary and Chelsea and I walked outside the coffee shop, and there's a beautiful church just across the street, and in front of the church there were three American soldiers who happened to come from a unit from Richmond, Virginia. And we walked over to shake hands with the soldiers, all enlisted personnel. And one of them said, "We're so happy to be here. These are good people, and it's a good thing we're doing."

We in the United States are proud of our role in Bosnia's new beginning. Look at the group who came here today from our Government: the Secretary of State; three four-star generals; 10 Members of Congress, prominent Members of Congress from both political parties; my distinguished opponent in the last Presidential election, Senator Dole, and Mrs. Dole. Americans care a lot about Bosnia; without regard to their party or their political differences, they care about the people.

We also have distinguished citizens here who have worked with nongovernmental organizations. They are a part of the amazing international force of human endeavor that we have seen brought to bear in this remarkable land in the last couple of years; people from all around the world waging a day-to-day campaign of renewal with you. We are proud that we played a role in helping you to silence the guns and separate the armies, to rebuild roads and factories, to reunite children with their families and refugees with their homes, to oversee democratic elections and open the airwaves to voices of tolerance, to call to account those accused of war crimes. We are here because you decided to end the suffering and the slaughter, and because we rejected the prospect of another needless war spreading in the heart of Europe, and because citizens all over the world were literally heartbroken by your suffering and determined to ease it.

To everyone who has taken part in IFOR and SFOR and civilian projects large and small,

I'd like to say a simple thank you. And God bless you all for what you have done and what you will do to change the face and the future of Bosnia.

Most of all I come before you with a message for those in whose hands the future of Bosnia lie, its leaders and its people. For in the end, the future is up to you, not to the Americans, not to the Europeans, not to anyone else.

Two years ago in Dayton, Ohio, the leaders of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia made a fateful choice for peace. But their responsibility and yours did not end there on that day. In fact, it only began. Your responsibility is to turn the documents signed in Dayton into a living reality, to make good on the pledge to bring Bosnia together as one country, with two multiethnic parts, sharing a common destiny. Those who rise to that responsibility will have the full support of the United States and the international community. Those who shirk it will isolate themselves. The world which continues to invest in your peace rightfully expects that you will do your part. More important, the people of this country expect results and they deserve them.

You have accomplished much, but there is much more to do. You have established the joint institutions of democracy. Now you must work within them, sharing power as you share responsibility. You have vowed to welcome back those displaced from their homes by war. Now you must vote for the return program so that they actually can come back with stronger protections for minorities and more job creation. You are working to restore Bosnia's economy. Now you must build up the laws to attract assistance and investment and root out the corruption that undermines confidence in economies.

You have begun to turn the media from an instrument of hate into a force of tolerance and understanding. Now you must raise it to international standards of objectivity and access and allow an independent press the freedom to thrive. You are taking the police out of the hands of warlords. Now you must help to reform, retrain, and reequip a democratic force that fosters security, not fear. You have pledged to isolate and arrest indicted war criminals. Now you must follow through on that commitment, both for the sake of justice and in the serving of lasting peace.

Most of all, the leaders here, you owe it to your country to bring out the best in people,

acting in concert, not conflict; overcoming obstacles, not creating them; rising above petty disputes, not fueling them. In the end, leaders in a democracy must bring out the best in people. But in the end, they serve the people who send them to their positions.

And so to the people of Bosnia, I say today, you must make your desire for peace and a common future clear to the leaders of each group. And you must then give leaders the absolute support they need to make the hard decisions for a common future. The people of Bosnia can make it happen. The example that ordinary citizens set among your neighbors, the standards that you demand from your leaders will determine this nation's fate.

After such a hard war, fighting aggressively for peace is difficult. So many have lost mothers and fathers, husbands and wives, sons and daughters. So many wounds are deep and scars still fresh. Energy may be short, at a time when an extraordinary effort of will is required to wrench yourself from the past and to begin to build a future together. How many people who have suffered as Farouk has suffered can stand clearly, unambiguously for the cause of peace and a common future. Many must if you are to succeed. And many of you are trying to do that in religious and civic settings of all kinds. I thank all of those who are making organized efforts to build a common future, especially those who are mobilizing women, because they know so painfully how important reconciliation and reconstruction are to your families and your children's future.

What I want all of you to believe today is that you can do it. In our time, from Guatemala to South Africa, from El Salvador to Northern Ireland, people are turning from conflict to conciliation. Still, the impulse to divide, if not to actually fight and kill, over ethnic or religious or racial differences, runs deep in human nature across the globe. It seems to be rooted in a fear of those who are different from ourselves and a false sense of superiority and security that separation and striving for supremacy seem to offer.

In America for a long time, one race literally enslaved another. It took the bloodiest war in our history to break the chains of bondage and more than 100 years of effort since then to root out their consequences. And we're still working at it. But we grow always stronger as

we let more and more of our fears and prejudices go. The more we recognize that, as we live and work and learn together, what we have in common is far more important than our differences. So that across all those differences, together we affirm our devotion to faith and to family. We seek opportunity for all and responsibility from all. We believe we are immeasurably stronger as one America than as a collection of separate, hostile camps. And this is a point of special importance to you. We find that affirming our Union allows us the security to respect, even to celebrate, our differences.

As we in America look ahead to a new century, we have people from over 180 different racial and ethnic groups who now call America home. We have embarked on a great national dialog across those groups about how we can live and prosper together in a new millennium. I would urge all of you to do the same thing here, to find more opportunities at the grassroots; to reach across the lines of division for the sake of your children and your future. I know that especially to the young people here, finding strength in your diversity may seem like an act of faith that requires quite a leap.

Many young people recall little before the war. One teenage Sarajevan said recently, "It's not just a question of starting again. It's a question of just starting." But I think it is important that all of you remember and teach that the war did violence not only to Bosnia's people but also to its history, its own tradition of tolerance. Just minutes from here, standing within yards from one another are a mosque, an Orthodox church, a Catholic church, and a synagogue, reminding us that generations of Muslims, Orthodox Christians, Catholics, and Jews live side by side and enrich the world by their example here, build schools and libraries and wondrous places of worship. Part of that population laid down their tools on Friday, part on Saturday, and part on Sunday. But their lives were woven together by marriage and culture, by work and common language and a shared pride in a place all could call home. That past should be remembered. And you should do everything in your power to make it a prolog. History can be your ally, not your enemy.

I am persuaded, having served in this office for 5 years, that the real differences around the world today are not between Jews and Arabs; Protestants and Catholics; Muslims, Croats, and Serbs. The real differences are be-

tween those who embrace peace and those who would destroy it, between those who look to the future and those who cling to the past, between those who open their arms and those who are determined to clench their fists, between those who believe that God made all of us equal and those foolish enough to believe they are superior to others just because of the color of their skin, of the religion of their families, of their ethnic background. This is a very small nation on an increasingly small planet. None of us has the moral standing to look down on another, and we should stop it.

I was thrilled that the Sarajevo symphony played before I was introduced to speak. Its violinist and cellist, percussionist and flutist, played together before the war, stayed together during the war, answered the mortars and shells with the sounds of music. Seven of the members were killed—Muslims, Croats, and Serbs. Well, they're still here, and they're still Muslims, Croats, and Serbs. And to tell you the truth, I know the tuba players from the violinists, but I can't tell the Muslims from the Croats from the Serbs. The harmony of their disparate voices—the harmony of their disparate voices—is what I hear. It reminds me of Bosnia's best past, and it should be the clarion call to your future.

Here at the dawn of the new millennium, let us recall that the century we are leaving began with the sound of gunfire in Sarajevo. And let us vow to start the new century with the music of peace in Sarajevo.

To the people of Bosnia I say, you have seen what war has wrought; now you know what peace can bring. So seize the chance before you. You can do nothing to change the past, but if you can let it go, you can do everything to build a future. The world is watching, and the world is with you. But the choice is yours. May you make the right one.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:55 a.m. at the National Theater. In his remarks, he referred to Farouk Sabanovic and Masha Mishdin, who introduced the President; Alija Izetbegovic, Presidency Chairman, and Kresimir Zubak, Presidency Member, National Government, Bosnia-Herzegovina; former Senator Bob Dole and his wife, Elizabeth, president, American Red Cross; Gen. Henry H. Shelton, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; Gen. Wesley K. Clark, Supreme Allied Commander,

Europe; and Gen. Eric K. Shinseki, Commander, U.S. Army, Europe. The President also referred to the NATO-led Implementation Force in Bosnia (IFOR) and the NATO-led Stabilization Force in Bosnia (SFOR).

Remarks to the Troops in Tuzla, Bosnia-Herzegovina

December 22, 1997

The President. Thank you for your laid-back welcome. [*Laughter*] Thank you, General Ellis. Ladies and gentlemen, I have come here with a great delegation of Americans, including the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Army, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe; many other distinguished military officials and officials from the White House; and a truly astonishing delegation from Congress, of both Democrats and Republicans together.

We have Senator Ted Stevens of Alaska; Senator Joe Biden of Delaware; Senator Joe Lieberman of Connecticut; Senator Dan Coats of Indiana; Representative John Kasich of Ohio; Representative Jack Murtha of Pennsylvania; Representative Ike Skelton of Missouri; Representative Elijah Cummings of Maryland; Representative Mac Collins of Georgia—anybody from Georgia? [*Cheers*] Representative John Boehner of Ohio; and Representative Steve Buyer of Indiana—anybody here from Indiana? [*Cheers*] I'm proud of all of them.

And let me say, we came here for two reasons today. We came here, first of all, to say thank you to all of you, to say what you are doing for your country is a good and noble thing. You are doing it well, and we are grateful. We know it's tough to be away from home at Christmas time. We know it's hard to be away from your families. But you are doing something profoundly important.

The second reason we came here was so that we could go to Sarajevo and see the leaders of the Muslims, the Croats, and the Serbs, and tell them that they made an agreement at Dayton that we are doing our dead-level best to help them enforce, and they promised that they would live and work together and build one country without ethnic prejudice or unfairness to any group; that we would not only end a war, that they would build a peace together; and that we in the United States were deter-

mined not only to do our part but we expected them to do theirs. And these good people in Bosnia, these little children, who have suffered so much, they deserve leaders who honor the commitments they made at Dayton and build a better, brighter future.

And we wanted to do that with one voice, without regard to party. So I want to say a special word of thanks to Senator Bob Dole and Mrs. Elizabeth Dole for coming. And I would like to give—Senators talk like this all the time; I don't quite know how to do it, but I think this is called yielding a portion of my time. I'd like for Bob Dole to come up here and say a few words.

[*At this point, former Senator Bob Dole made brief remarks.*]

The President. Thank you, Senator Dole. Thank you for not reading my speech. [*Laughter*] I like the one you gave.

Let me first of all say that I'm delighted to be here with the Iron Soldiers of the 1st Armored Division, with the 2d Armored Cavalry and all of the other units of Task Force Eagle. But I also want the people back home to know, through our friends in the press who are here, that there are a lot of National Guardsmen and Reservists here. And I thank all of you.

Now, Hillary and I, along with the phone time that you all get—I hope you enjoy that hour on the telephone. I know you're all sitting there thinking, "Am I going to use it all at one time or am I going to divide it up? Am I going to call four people or just one?" Decisions, decisions!

We were able to bring some school supplies over here with us, some toys as well. And I know you're going to be able to distribute those to children here who are needy and deserving. I want to thank especially Lieutenant Colonel Mark Little, who started the program to take care of these children who have been so hurt